

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 IO-10 AID-05 SCCT-01 /082 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8911

INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PK, AF

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCENE QUIETS DOWN IN PAKISTAN

REF: ISLAMABAD 1473

1. THE POLITICAL TEMPO IN PAKISTAN HAS SLOWED DOWN FROM THE EXCITEMENT GENERATED LAST WEEK BY THE DEATH OF NWFP MINISTER SHERPAO, THE BAN ON THE OPPOSITION NATIONAL NWAMI PARTY AND MASS ARRESTS OF ITS LEADERS. THE LARGE PROCESSIONS, WHICH SOMETIMES BECAME UNRULY, HAVE TAPERED OFF AND HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY MEETINGS OF PARTY WORKERS, ASSOCIATIONS OF LAWYERS, STUDENTS, ETC. THE PAST WEEK HAS SEEN THE EXTENSION OF POLITICAL ACTIVITIES TO TRIBAL MALIKS (LEADERS) IN THE FRONTIER AND BALUCHISTAN WHO HAVE MET TO CONDOLE THE DEATH AND CONDEMN KABUL'S INTERFERENCE. ALTHOUGH IT IS TOO SOON TO TELL WHAT COURSE NAP LEADERS AND PATHAN REGIONALISTS WILL TAKE IN RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT CRACKDOWN, SO FAR THE ARRESTED

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LEADERS ARE CONTESTING THEIR DETENTION IN COURT, SOME

OTHERS HAVE FLED TO ESCAPE ARREST. MOST POLITICAL OBSERVERS ARE AWAITING THE NEXT PHASE: THE REFERRAL TO THE SUPREME COURT NEXT WEEK OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ORDER DISSOLVING NAP.

2. THE GOP HAS ALSO BACKED AWAY FROM ACTIONS WHICH WOULD HAVE PREVENTED NAP LEADERS FROM LEGAL PARTICIPATION IN PAK POLITICAL LIFE. SOME OF THE ARRESTED LEGISLATORS AND PARTY LEADERS HAVE BEEN RELEASED. GOP OFFICIALS HAVE EXPLAINED PRIVATELY THAT MEMBERSHIP IN THE PARTY PRIOR TO ITS BAN WILL NOT BE GROUNDS FOR IMPRISONMENT. THIS WOULD APPEAR TO GIVE SOME HOPE THAT NAP LEGISLATORS WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE HOLDING THEIR SEATS - OF COURSE, AS INDEPENDENTS - UNLESS THEY ARE SPECIFICALLY CHARGED AS INDIVIDUALS UNDER PENAL CODE.

3. CONSUL PESHAWAR REPORTS THAT FRONTIER IS GENERALLY QUIET AND THE POLITICALLY ARTICULATE FEEL RELIEVED BY THE IMPOSITION OF GOVERNOR'S RULE. SPECULATION HAS NOW TURNED TOWARD THE QUESTION OF WHO WILL LEAD THE PROVINCIAL PAKISTAN PEOPLES' PARTY AND WHAT NEW ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE MADE IN PUTTING TOGETHER A NEW CABINET. ALTHOUGH FEDERAL HOME MINISTER QAIYUM CONTINUES HIS DIATRIBE AGAINST NAP AND GOA COMPLICITY IN SHERPAO DEATH, PAK TIMES ON FEBRUARY 20 QUOTED THE NEW INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE AS GIVING "ASSURANCES THAT THERE WOULD BE NO POLITICAL VICTIMIZATION" DURING POLICE INVESTIGATION.

4. ARMA ISLAMABAD REPORTS THAT PAK ARMY UNITS FROM PESHAWAR TO QUETTA PLACED UNDER ALERT AND PRESUMES THAT THIS IS IN RESPONSE TO INTERNAL POLITICAL EVENTS FOR PURPOSE MAINTAINING THE PEACE RATHER THAN IN FEAR OF ATTACK FROM AFGHANISTAN. WE AS WELL AS THE BRITISH EMBASSY HAVE NO INFORMATION OF ANY TROOP MOVEMENTS.

5. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN NWFP PROVINCE BEING REPORTED BY SEPTTEL TO SELECTED ADDRESSEES.
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